'IMMUNITY TIME TOO SHORT'

Novel Rejects Labor Probe Bid

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(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE — Much sought witness Gordon Novel has refused to testify before the state Labor-Management Commission of Inquiry investigating labor troubles in the Baton Rouge area.

Novel testified at length yesterday before the East Baton Rouge Parish Grand Jury in connection with its probe of organized crime.

Afterwards, East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Sargent Pitcher said the jury dismissed Novel and he is free to leave the state. It was not known whether he left immediately, but when the labor probers asked Novel to testify, his attorneys told them the witness' 48-hour period of immunity from arrest in Louisiana wouldn't stretch far enough to permit such testimony.

NOVEL also sought by Orleans Parish DA Jim Garrison in his probe of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, was granted the 48-hour immunity by Gov. John J. McKeithen and Garrison as his condition in return for telling what he knew about organized crime.

Attorneys for Novel and the labor probe commission agreed commission investigators could interview Novel after he leaves the state.

Novel's grace period was to expire some time today. If he were still in the state, he would be liable to arrest on Orleans Parish charges of conspiracy to commit burglary, of being a fugitive witness, and a Terrebonne Parish charge of simple burglary.

THE LABOR probers sought to question Novel at the request of Edward Partin, Baton Rouge Teamster leader, who has figured in the board's investigation.

In a nine-hour session before the jury yesterday, Novel had time to tell all he

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knew about crime, corruption, Garrison and anything else he deemed pertinent.

However, at a lengthy press conference afterwards he tossed out a lot of innuendos, ducked specifics, said Clay Shaw was a "patsy," and declared he had been offered a bribe to help free imprisoned Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa.

THE JURY dismissed Novel after listening to him on and off from 10:15 a. m. to 7:30 p. m. yesterday. It is scheduled to resume its work today.

Shaw is the retired New Orleans businessman accused by Garrison of conspiring to kill President John F. Kennedy.

Novel was brought to the state from Columbus, Ohio, where he took refuge after fleeing the grasp of Garrison. He was brought in by a Baton Rouge sheriff's department plane.

Pitcher said he was not free to comment on what action the jury might take on Novel's testimony.

THE BATON Rouge jury has been studying organized crime, the Hoffa affair and unsolved bombings.

Novel was flanked by five attorneys during the press conference. The five, including Steve Plotkin of New Orleans, and Jerry Weiner of Columbus, met frequently outside the jury room with Novel during the day.

The 29-year-old former New Orleans lounge owner would testify for a while, leave the grand jury room for a brief period, and tell his attorneys what had transpired, and then return to the room.

He left the grand jury building for about 20 minutes during the day to bring material from his room at a motel near the state capitol. Sandwiches were brought into the jury room for lunch.

NOVEL declared — when asked for specific information on crime and corruption—that an effort had been made by an investigator in New Orleans to get him to provide an affidavit saying Walter Sheridan had used bugging equipment against Hoffa.

Sheridan is a former Justice Department investigator who became an investigative reporter for the National Broadcasting Co. and helped produce a program critical of Garrison.

Novel said both money and withdrawal of charges in New Orleans against him in New Orleans were offered.

NOVEL, who claims to be a former employe of the Central Intelligence Agency, declined to reveal the source of his income since he left Louisiana. He said he had money at the time.

He also said he, himself, is paying his battery of attorneys, one of whom Garrison insists is being financed by the CIA.

When asked what specific evidence he had to support his charge that Garrison's Kennedy investigation is a fraud, Novel said he had once discussed with the DA the means of obtaining a confession from David Ferrie, the deceased pilot Garrison says was a key part of the assassination plot.

Novel said that on Feb. 21, Garrison proposed a three-part plan to get Ferrie's "confession."

MUCH OF his information on crime in the state, Novel said, was turned over to Life Magazine before his grand jury testimony.

Most of the information on several tapes, relates to the Garrison probe "and will be made available at the proper time," Novel said.

Novel said he would like to testify at the conspiracy trial of Shaw, now scheduled next February.

"This is the patsy of the century," he said of Shaw. Of the probe, he said "from A to Z it is a fraud."